

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Rule of Law and Transitional Justice in Conflict-Affected Situations, October 18th, 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Spinellis, Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations

We would like to express our appreciation to the presidency of Azerbaijan for convening this important open debate, as well as to the Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UN Women and the Under-Secretary-General for their important contributions. We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union and we welcome the adoption of resolution 2122 (2013) by the Council earlier today.

In a conflict-affected environment, violence against women is significantly intensified, indicating that in many cases, violence is an extension of existing gender inequality in society. Despite the continuous efforts of the international community to eradicate violence against women, sexual violence in armed conflicts remains a widespread phenomenon. It exacerbates and prolongs situations of armed conflict and is therefore directly linked to the maintenance of peace and security.

Among others, resolution 2106 (2013) underlines the importance of women's greater participation and leadership in decision-making processes in areas of conflict. In many cases, women are excluded from decision-making. Nevertheless, their full and equal participation in peacemaking and peacebuilding is indispensable for the success of those processes, since it is the only way to ensure that the needs of women involved in conflict-related situations are effectively addressed. Women must be seen not solely as victims, but as active agents of change and of peacekeeping.

Prevention, rather than reaction, must be a priority. That requires the existence of early warning mechanisms based on accurate, objective and reliable information. The collection of data relating to sexual violence in areas of conflict is crucial and strongly encouraged, so that both national and international actors may be duly informed.

While it is crucial to address sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict contexts, it is equally important to combat impunity and strengthen both international and national justice responses to those crimes. Consequently, capacity-building related to the rule of law, that is wide in scope and goes beyond traditional areas of law reform and strengthening of justice and law enforcement institutions are necessary.

The rule of law should address justice, equality and equity with a strong focus on the empowerment of women and girls, gender equality, and preventing and combating violence against women as essential preconditions for equitable and inclusive sustainable development. In that context, we praise the work of the United Nations in assisting Member States to address rule of law issues in conflict contexts and we consider it vital that the United Nations continues to emphasize the importance of providing redress and assistance to victims in conflict, post-conflict and other crisis situations.

The prevention of and response to violence against children, in particular, including sexual violence and abuse, forced marriage and maltreatment, should continue to be an important focus area of United Nations assistance.

To ensure genuine rule of law, beyond the formal establishment of institutions, judicial systems need to be fully accessible to all individuals and groups. A major obstacle to access is the cost involved in legal advice and legal representation services. We support the work of the United Nations to implement a wide variety of projects focused on providing legal aid to address that obstacle.

In conclusion, Greece is of the view that genuine and inclusive participation in the elaboration of transitional justice mechanisms ensures that they not only respond to the needs and expectations of victims, but provide transformative change for sustainable transition to peace and reconciliation, which is the ultimate goal of all of our efforts.